

# The French-American Conflict over North America and the Fall of the Fourth Republic

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## Résumé

La guerre d'Algérie en général et la crise de mai 1958 en particulier ont longtemps été traitées comme des affaires intérieures françaises. Des archives nouvellement ouvertes en France, aux États-Unis et en Grande-Bretagne nous obligent à réévaluer le rôle qu'y jouèrent des puissances étrangères. Dès la crise de Suez le gouvernement américain fit usage de la diplomatie économique afin de contraindre la France à réduire son effort de guerre, craignant qu'une escalade du conflit ne fasse tomber l'Afrique du nord sous influence communiste ou nasserienne. Lorsque des heurts armés à la frontière de la Tunisie menacèrent d'étendre la guerre, Washington prépara un ultimatum exigeant des négociations avec le FLN. La contrainte américaine exacerba les relations entre civils et militaires et entraîna le renversement du pénultième gouvernement de la IV<sup>e</sup> république par l'Assemblée. Ainsi, l'enchaînement des événements qui permit à de Gaulle de terminer la guerre a-t-il commencé avec un effort américain visant à forcer la France à conclure une paix rapide.

## Abstract

Historians have long treated the Algerian War in general and the May 1958 crisis in particular as domestic affairs. But newly open archives in France, the US, and Great Britain compel a reassessment of the rôle of outsiders. Beginning with the Suez crisis American officials used economic diplomacy to force a reduction in France 's war effort, fearing that an escalating conflict would cause North Africa to fall under communist or Nasserist influence. When border clashes with Tunisia threatened an expansion of the war Washington prepared an ultimatum demanding negotiations with the FLN. American coercion exacerbated civil- military relations and caused the Assembly to overturn the penultimate government of the Fourth Republic. Thus the chain of events that gave de Gaulle the power to end the war began with an American effort to compel France to conclude an early peace.

# The French-American Conflict over North Africa and the Fall of the Fourth Republic

par  
MATTHEW CONNELLY \*

La guerre d'Algérie en général et la crise de mai 1958 en particulier ont longtemps été traitées comme des affaires intérieures françaises. Des archives nouvellement ouvertes en France, aux États-Unis et en Grande-Bretagne nous obligent à réévaluer le rôle qu'y jouèrent des puissances étrangères. Dès la crise de Suez le gouvernement américain fit usage de la diplomatie économique afin de contraindre la France à réduire son effort de guerre, craignant qu'une escalade du conflit ne fasse tomber l'Afrique du nord sous influence communiste ou nasserienne. Lorsque des heurts armés à la frontière de la Tunisie menacèrent d'étendre la guerre, Washington prépara un ultimatum exigeant des négociations avec le FLN. La contrainte américaine exacerba les relations entre civils et militaires et entraîna le renversement du penultième gouvernement de la IV<sup>e</sup> république par l'Assemblée. Ainsi, l'enchaînement des événements qui permit à de Gaulle de terminer la guerre a-t-il commencé avec un effort américain visant à forcer la France à conclure une paix rapide.

*Mots-clés* : Guerre d'Algérie, crise de mai 1958, relations franco-américaines, diplomatie économique

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*Key-words* : Algerian War, crisis of may 1958, US-French relations, economic diplomacy.

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For more than forty years the Algerian War has never ceased to incite controversy. Yet in one respect the official line of all the Fourth Republic governments — emphatically reaffirmed by de Gaulle and rarely questioned even by the war's opponents — continues to define a popular and intellectual consensus : this was an internal affair concerning France alone. Thus, in a recent poll only 11 % of respondents characterized it as an international conflict, while Jacques Julliard has written, « without the least irony », that one « can do a history of the Algerian War completely without speaking of Algerians ». His colleagues have shown still less interest in investigating the role of France's allies and adversaries abroad. In summarizing some of the handful of articles on this subject, Charles-Robert Ageron accepted de Gaulle's claim to have been unaffected by the attitudes of other governments « barring new revelations... » But, one might ask, how could there not be « new revelations », since Ageron rendered this verdict when almost all of the relevant French archives were still closed ? It is as if le Général's memoirs had been accepted as the last word on World War II <sup>1</sup>.

While it will never be easy to divine de Gaulle's intentions and influences, recently-released records from France, the US, and Great Britain do indeed contain revelations which compel a reassessment of the international dimension of the Algerian War. Together they show that the chain of events in 1958 that gave de Gaulle the power to end the war began with an American effort to force the last leaders of the Fourth Republic to conclude an early peace. Starting with the Suez crisis US officials exploited France's chronic budget and balance of payments deficits to exert pressure on its Algerian policy. When they finally agreed to a \$650 million loan in January 1958 they required a sharp cut in military expenditures and the demobilization of 150,000 troops — and this at a time when the fighting in Algeria had never been more fierce. After France's bombing of the frontier village of Sakiet Sidi Youssef the following month Washington used its economic leverage to compel Paris to settle its border conflict with Tunisia and prepared an ultimatum demanding negotiations with the Front de libération nationale (FLN) under American auspices. But in April a defiant National Assembly repudiated US mediation and with it the penultimate government of the Fourth Republic. The interregnum ended with the uprising in

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1. Benjamin STORA, *La gangrène et l'oubli : La mémoire de la guerre d'Algérie*, (Paris, 1992), 284 ; JULLIARD, « Le mépris et la modernité », 153, and AGERON, « Conclusion », 622, both in *La Guerre d'Algérie et les Français*, ed. Jean-Pierre RIOUX (Paris, 1990). Pierre MÉLANDRI's « La France et le "jeu double" des États-Unis », 428-450, also in RIOUX, Egya N. SANGMUAH's, « Eisenhower and Containment in North Africa, 1956-1960 », *Middle East Journal* 44 (1990) : 76-91, Irwin WALL's « The United States, Algeria, and the Fall of the Fourth French Republic », *Diplomatic History* 18 (Winter 1994) : 489-511, and Yahia ZOUBIR's « The United States, the Soviet Union and Decolonization of the Maghreb, 1945-62 », *Middle Eastern Studies* 31 (January 1995) : 58-84, are the only archive-based accounts of US-French relations over Algeria. It is indicative that none of the three scholars known to be working on diplomatic histories of the war is French — two are American and one is Tunisian.

Algiers which returned de Gaulle to power. If, as Michael Harrison has argued, it is « only a slight exaggeration » to view the events leading to the collapse of the Fourth Republic as « an anti-American revolt », only now do we know the full magnitude of what they were revolting *against* <sup>2</sup>.

Historians who treat this topic have long debated whether the fall of the Fourth Republic was a murder or suicide, seldom asking why its last ministerial crisis first began. In the Gaullists, the Army, and the innumerable plots and counter-plots that dominate the literature they have rounded up the usual suspects, whereas in US economic diplomacy and the policy that lay behind it we have both a weapon and a motive. Yet the newly-available documents do not simply shift the blame — or credit — for the May crisis overseas, since they also show that some French officials invited American involvement to enable them to end the war. Instead, they demonstrate that it was produced by a complex interdynamic of domestic and international influences. More generally, if this critical episode is any indication, the newly-open archives are much more than a source of revelations. By allowing us to document the scope and significance of the struggle between France and the FLN for the sympathy and support of outsiders they require us to reconsider the very nature of the Algerian War.

The conflict between the US and France over Algeria began with their attitudes toward the future of North Africa. Like George Bernard Shaw's quip about Anglo Saxons, they were two peoples separated by a common language : They shared the same discourse concerning the development of « Eurafrica » while clashing over the timing, means, and manner of achieving their aims. Even before de Gaulle's return many Frenchmen favored gradually loosening political ties with Africa while reinforcing its economic integration with Europe. Alongside this vision both they and the Americans were haunted by the specter of an alliance of the Soviets and Arab nationalists that would divide France from Africa and envelop Europe from the south. This was the central image in the influential strategic doctrine of *Guerre Revolutionnaire* which inspired much of French propaganda <sup>3</sup>. Echoing this theme, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles told Foreign Minister Christian Pineau near the height of the crisis in 1958 that « [T]he prospect of seeing the hostilities spread beyond North Africa from Algeria to the Persian Gulf — with the communists providing logistical support and armed aid — is terrifying for me, and I have the greatest hopes for the future of Europe » <sup>4</sup>.

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2. « French Anti-Americanism under the Fourth Republic and the Gaullist Solution », in *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, ed. Jacques RUPNIK, Marie-France TOINET, and Denis LACORNE (London, 1990), 173-174.

3. Raoul GIRARDET, *L'idée coloniale en France de 1871 à 1962* (Paris, 1972), 340-344, and Peter PARET, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria: The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (New York, 1964).

4. Memorandum of conversation (memcon) Dulles — Selwyn-Lloyd — Pineau, 3/12/58, *Documents diplomatiques français*, 1958, I, No. 179 (hereafter DDF with year and volume).

Dulles was sincere when he assured his allies that France was the natural link between Europe and Africa, with the Maghreb « to be considered as a kind of pool of raw materials for Western Europe like the Western states were for the thirteen colonies during the formation of our republic ». The problem, he explained, was that while « their ends are the same... they differ on the means ». He feared that a confrontational policy undermined moderate North African nationalists and strengthened extremists, leading to « grave dissension between the West and Islam » — and thereby creating the very danger to Europe the French claimed to be combating<sup>5</sup>. The most prudent policy, in the American view, was to appease the gathering strength of Arab nationalism.

Thus, while the US had long given qualified support to the French position in the neighboring protectorates of Morocco and Tunisia, lobbying for them in the annual debates in the United Nations, they also maintained discrete contacts with their adversaries and aided them with secret funding through the Central Intelligence Agency<sup>6</sup>. But by the outbreak of hostilities in Algeria this « middle of the road » approach appeared to be leading nowhere : grudging support of their ally's efforts did nothing to arrest the weakening of France in Europe or to reduce the risks of a wider war in North Africa. Even private criticism of French conduct seemed ineffective because it aroused their suspicions of American motives, especially once oil was discovered in the Sahara. Yet openly insisting that France move more quickly to a neo-colonial relationship with North Africa was certain to cause a schism in the Atlantic Alliance<sup>7</sup>. Little wonder that when a 1955 review of regional policy recommended a joint *démarche* with Britain calling on Paris to come to terms with the nationalists Dulles complained that « French North Africa is an awful mess to get into »<sup>8</sup>.

Before Dulles made any change in policy the French too began moving to the « middle of the road ». After months of contentious negotiations in the midst of chronic violence they ceded what they called « independence within interdependence » to Morocco and Tunisia in March 1956, hoping to maintain the

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5. Alphand to Pineau, 4/25/58, Ministère des Affaires étrangères (MAE), Paris, Série MLA, Dossier 24 (provisional number). See also NSC 5614/1, 10/3/56, US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-57* (Washington, 1989), XVIII, 139-141 (hereafter FRUS with year and volume) ; Rountree memo to Dulles, 8/28/57, *ibid.*, 276.

6. As Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones argues, the CIA later took an « option » on Algerian independence with indirect support for the FLN, *The CIA and American Democracy* (New Haven, 1989), 162. They funneled most of their support through labor organizations, Judith FRANCE, « AFL-CIO Foreign Policy : An Algerian Example, 1954-1962 », (PhD. diss., Ball State University, 1981). For US-French relations over Moroccan and Tunisian decolonization see Samya El MECHIAT, *Tunisie. Les Chemins vers l'Indépendance, 1945-1956* (Paris, 1992) ; Annie LACROIX-RIZ, *Les protectorats d'Afrique du Nord entre la France et Washington* (Paris, 1988) ; Egya SANGMUAH, « The United States and the French Empire in North Africa, 1946-1956 : Decolonization in the Age of Containment », (Ph. D. diss., University of Toronto, 1989).

7. Dillon to Department of State (DOS), 6/5/55, FRUS, 1955-57, XVIII, 95-97 ; Tyler memo to Jones, 6/16/55, *ibid.*, 98-99 ; NSC 5436/1, 4/4/56, *ibid.*, 124.

8. Memcon Dulles-Holmes, 10/3/55, FRUS, 1955-57, XVIII, 516-17.

maximum amount of influence over their foreign and economic policies. Above all, they sought to prevent them from supporting the Algerian rebels by manipulating foreign aid and trade and leaving behind troops and bases. Withdrawal from Algeria itself was still unthinkable. Any governing majority had to include die-hard colonialists to overcome the Communist bloc — though even they agreed to give Mollet special powers to reestablish order. Yet this broad-based backing broke down over new taxes to actually pay for the swelling tide of troops and aid flowing to Algeria. This contributed to inflation and budget and balance of payments deficits that together constituted the Achilles heel of the otherwise unbeatable French forces there.

The discrepancy between the Assembly's support for the war and its unwillingness to pay for it was only one of many contradictions in the French approach to Algeria: while insisting that it was an internal matter they also argued that it would be quickly settled were it not for external interference — either actual, as in arms supplied by Egypt through Tunisia, or potential, as in the rebels' confidence that if they held out international pressure would force Paris to sue for peace. But to counteract this interference the French had to act outside Algeria — whether by asking for military and economic aid and full diplomatic backing from their allies, which forced them to consider their preferences in formulating policy, or by direct action against Cairo and Tunis, all of which made nonsense of the idea that Algeria was a domestic difficulty concerning France alone.

US officials suspected that their ally's obsession over foreign aid to the FLN was merely a vent for their frustrations and an excuse for their failures, but they could not ignore the issue's emotional power and potential for damaging the alliance. Following an attack by French *colons* on the US consulate in Tunis and in response to a series of appeals from American representatives in France Eisenhower granted them what amounted to a last chance to prevail by brute force. As Ambassador C. Douglas Dillon announced that the US was « solidly behind France in her search for a liberal and equitable solution of the problems in Algeria », the American representatives to NATO approved a resolution acquiescing in the transfer of French forces<sup>9</sup>. At the same time, the Eisenhower administration allowed the diversion of US-supplied equipment to Algeria, gave priority to French orders for helicopters, and sold them 400 planes at a discount<sup>10</sup>.

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9. Dillon's speech is in the White House Central Files, Subject Series, box 71, DOS, April 1956 (2), NSC Series, DDEL.

10. Though the Americans could not arm them with machine guns they referred the French to someone who would, Couve de Murville to MAE, 3/21/56, Direction Amérique 1952-63, États-Unis-Afrique du Nord, Dossier 31. They could have had no illusions as to what that would mean: « We are reassured by... statement French do not contemplate retaliatory measures against civil populations, which would shock world opinion ». Under Secretary of State Herbert Hoover, Jr. told Dillon, adding, « FYI. Certain intelligence reports are to effect French probably contemplate just such

The American position was best put by Deputy Undersecretary of State Robert Murphy in a conversation with a Quai d'Orsay official. While recognizing that the French were determined to succeed, he recalled that they had made the same promises in Indochina only to be « submerged ». Murphy warned that the US could not allow another such debacle since they feared nothing more than disorder in North Africa. « But », he added, « we agree to let you try. If you truly believe that you can solve the problem by force, do it but do it quickly. If you succeed, no one will begrudge you for having been too tough. But, if you cannot reestablish calm quickly, then make all the necessary concessions ». The United States would then be compelled to make up for their lost influence <sup>11</sup>.

The parameters of this policy were laid out by the National Security Council (NSC) in a September 1956 session. Eisenhower said that he wanted French influence to be maintained as long and as much as possible. Nevertheless, the resulting memorandum allowed for American military aid to Morocco and Tunisia « if this becomes necessary to retain the US position... » The authors were concerned that they not join an « Egyptian bloc » sympathetic to the Moscow <sup>12</sup>. Ironically, at this time the Soviets also said they favored continued if reformed French influence in the region and Khrushchev even warned Mollet of another Indochina. They feared that, as in South Vietnam, the *Americans* might move in, whereas if they gave more forthright backing to the FLN they were certain to pay a high price in relations with Paris <sup>13</sup>.

Yet the North Africans were not simply objects of strategic interest awaiting a new scramble for Africa. Instead, whether it was the Moroccans exploiting America's fears for its local Strategic Air Command bases to exert pressure on the French or the Algerians using China's ambitions in Africa to put heat on the Soviets, they played off the great powers to secure their own interests. The master of the game was Habib Bourguiba, the pro-Western President of Tunisia, who exploited US fears of communist inroads while arguing for the Algerian

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measures. Certain items on list [of arms] requested are not reassuring ». 6/17/55, FRUS, 1955-57, XVIII, 221.

11. Note pour le Directeur général politique, 12/27/56, MAE, MLA vol. 23 bis (provisional number), Action extérieure, États-Unis, déc 1956-déc 1957, Cote EU, which described the earlier conversation to explain America's post-Suez policy. See also Alphand to Pineau, 5/24/57, DDF, 1957, I (Paris, 1990), No. 847-849.

12. 298th Meeting of the NSC, 9/27/56, FRUS, 1955-57, XVIII, 130-137; NSC 5614/1 Staff Study; NSC 5614/1, 143.

13. Dejean to Pineau, 2/2/57, MAE, Europe 1944-1960, URSS, Dossier 271; « Note pour le ministre résident en Algérie », 5/23/57, *ibid.*; Dejean to Pineau, DDF, 1957, I (Paris, 1990), No. 106. For Khrushchev warning see his recollection in Dejean to Couve de Murville, 9/14/59, MAE, MLA, Action extérieure, URSS, dossier 86. On the Soviets' strategic dilemmas, see Slimane CHIKH, *L'Algérie en Armes, ou le temps des certitudes* (Paris, 1981), 444-450; Mohieddine HADHRI, *L'URSS et le Maghreb: De la Révolution d'octobre à L'indépendance de L'Algérie, 1917-1962* (Paris, 1985), 142-143, 151-152, 160-167.



cause in TV interviews, the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, and personal letters to one of his many American admirers, Dwight Eisenhower.

Beginning in late 1956 Bourguiba acted more directly by allowing the rebels to use his country as a sanctuary to resupply and launch raids back into Algeria. The French responded with economic embargoes and military operations on both sides of the border. Yet this pressure could effectively coerce the Tunisians only if they were isolated from outside aid. If the NSC policy's provision for supplying arms were implemented it would symbolically guarantee Tunisian autonomy and defeat French-imposed « interdependence ».

It is clear in retrospect that the new American policy was untenable. By setting a time limit to their tolerance they had encouraged the French to resort to still more drastic measures. Moreover, the weapons sales associated them with French excesses and thus made an intervention to salvage relations with the nationalists seem all the more imperative. But it took the Tunisians to turn this latent conflict into an overt confrontation by threatening to resort to aid from Egypt or the Eastern Bloc<sup>14</sup>. Thus, in the emotion-laden atmosphere of the Algerian War, in which atrocities were committed on both sides in the full glare of international media attention, US and French policies that were alike « middle of the road » were heading slowly but inexorably for a head-on collision.

Though it would take a year-and-a-half before its full impact was felt the beginning of the Franco-American clash over North Africa coincided with the Suez crisis. The French embarked on the expedition hoping to end the Algerian conflict by overthrowing Gamal Abdel Nasser, whom they viewed as the mainstay of the FLN. As the crisis broke Eisenhower was all too aware of their intentions :

Damn it, the French, they're just egging the Israeli's on — hoping somehow to get out of their *own* North African troubles. Damn it... we tried to tell them they would repeat Indochina all over again in North Africa. And they said, « Oh no ! Algeria's part of metropolitan France ! » — and all that damn nonsense<sup>15</sup>.

More than just an emotional outburst, Eisenhower's anger signalled a whole new attitude. Dulles announced to the NSC that they had to decide the future of colonialism. They could no longer walk the tightrope between the competing demands of their allies and the emerging Third World. If they did not assert leadership the Soviets surely would. « Win or lose, we will share the fate of Britain and France », he warned, and « the British and French would not win »<sup>16</sup>.

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14. Habib BOURGUIBA, Jr., personal interview, 7/28/92.

15. Stephen E. AMBROSE, *Eisenhower : Volume Two, The President* (New York, 1984), 356, and see Maurice VAISSE. « France and the Suez Crisis », in *Suez 1956 : The Crisis and its Consequences*, ed. Wm. Roger Louis and Roger Owen (Oxford, 1989), 137-138.

16. 302nd Meeting of the NSC, 11/1/56, AWF, NSC Series, DDEL.

For all the emotion that attended the end of empires, profanity and portentous rhetoric were simply the surface expression of a calm, deliberate exercise of economic power by an administration intent to impose its will. After the US allowed financial crises in France and Britain to force their withdrawal from Egypt Vice President Richard Nixon indicated to Ambassador Hervé Alphand that they were ready to help. But American aid was dangled in front of Alphand only to be yanked away. When he approached Dulles the Secretary said that they « should not take that [Nixon] speech too literally » and maintained that, while “[t]he Department of State would be glad to help in any way it can and has no objections on political grounds... Such credits... must be justified primarily on financial and economic grounds” »<sup>17</sup>.

Of course, there can be no separation of economic and political issues, especially with that most explosive issue of all. As a memo within the Quai d’Orsay concluded, « These phrases signify that the American Government... wants to make known its opinion on each of the major elements of government expenses, doubtless including those pertaining to Algeria »<sup>18</sup>. Unfortunately for the French that opinion had begun to change. When Dulles told Eisenhower that they had once again asked for more open support in Algeria he replied that, « having gone so far to try to protect the independence of the Arab nations, he did not want to back a French position which might destroy all the good we had done »<sup>19</sup>. So when the French requested over \$500 million in American military aid Charles Yost at the embassy in Paris haughtily — and hypocritically — answered that the Algerian war was a French concern and the US had « not considered the financing of such purchases, either directly or indirectly, to be a suitable undertaking... » Yost advised this attitude to « encourage [the] French to proceed promptly with required drastic economies »<sup>20</sup>.

In fact France’s economy was booming. The problem was that, rather than risk the political consequences of balancing the budget, slowing the expansion, or ending the war, successive French governments tolerated massive balance of

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17. On Nixon. see « Note pour le ministre », 12/27/56, MAE, Direction économique-Coopération économique 1945-1960 (DE-CE), vol. 331, Aide américaine, 1954-1957. « Too literally », memcon Dulles-Alphand, 1/22/57, FRUS, 1955-57, XXVII, 96-98. As Diane KUNZ has shown, the French escaped the immediate effects of US economic diplomacy during the Suez crisis through a timely loan from the IMF, *The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 113-114, 192-193. As we shall see, this was just a stay of execution.

18. « Note pour Monsieur Gazier », 1/30/57, MAE, DE-CE, vol. 331, Aide américaine, 1954-1957. It might be argued that American pressure was motivated solely by a concern for the French economy and had nothing to do with Algeria per se. Yet the US Treasury itself judged that, « The African crisis, though harmful, is not a preponderant influence », in French financial problems, so the US interest in Algeria cannot be seen as purely pecuniary — even if that was how they presented it to the French, Burgess memo to Humphrey, 2/25/57, EOF, Part 1: Eisenhower Administration Series, University Publications of America (UPA) microfilm publication (1991), reel 17, frame 892.

19. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 1/11/57, John Foster Dulles Papers, White House Memoranda Series, Box 6, Meetings with the President 1957 (8), DDEL.

20. Yost to DOS, 2/13/57, FRUS, 1955-57, XXVII, 115-118, and 2/11/57, *ibid.*, 100-101.

payments deficits to ease inflationary pressures. The Cassandra of the coming collapse, Mendès France warned his countrymen that « [w]ar requires a war economy. War brings austerity or inflation — and, in the latter case, it brings defeat »<sup>21</sup>.

Some French officials concluded that they would have to come up with a comprehensive financial plan both for its own sake and to appease the Americans and that they would have more autonomy in formulating it if they did so before the impending crisis. This view elicited fierce resistance from the Quai d'Orsay's deputy director of external finance, Olivier Wormser. Reading a memorandum that made just this argument, he angrily scrawled in the margin : « The truth is, the USA will help us if we present a recovery plan, and such a recovery plan cannot but entail pressure to diminish our Algerian defenses, thus leading to a settlement in Algeria »<sup>22</sup>.

Perhaps mistrustful of their subordinates, ministers resorted to a secret mission by Robert Marjolin to approach the Americans yet again. Dulles told Marjolin that there were two obstacles standing in the way : First, the Americans thought France could be self-sufficient if its government took the necessary action. « The second was the problem posed by the continuation of hostilities in Algeria which seemed like a never-ending drain on French resources. While the US realized the difficulties of the problems involved, it had no suggestions to offer for a solution. Nevertheless, it was difficult to contemplate financial assistance while this drain was continuing »<sup>23</sup>.

In June 1957 a new Finance Minister, Felix Gaillard, pushed through an austerity package. But the Americans didn't budge. The French could only conclude that « The settlement of the Algerian question appears, in the eyes of the American authorities, more and more linked to the problem of exceptional and sizable financial aid... »<sup>24</sup>. The only alternative to bilateral or multilateral aid — since both required approval by Washington — would have been a far more stringent austerity plan which would have been politically difficult, if not impossible. As a Quai d'Orsay memorandum concluded later that same month, « In order to pursue our intended policy in Algeria we must bring about a financial recovery. The longer we wait to do it the more we will have need of

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21. MENDÈS FRANCE, *Oeuvres complètes*, IV : *Pour une république moderne, 1955-1962* (Paris, 1987), 374.

22. « L'Éventualité d'une aide américaine », 2/16/57, MAE, DE-CE, vol. 331, Aide américaine, 1954-1957.

23. Memcon Dulles-Marjolin, 5/20/57, US National Archives, College Park, MD, RG 59, Central Decimal Files, 851.10. And see also memcon Dulles-Vimont, 7/11/57, MAE, MLA vol. 23 bis (provisional number), Action extérieure, États-Unis, déc 1956-déc 1957, Cote EU.

24. Cottier to Sadrin, 7/15/57, MAE, DE-CE, vol. 331, Aide américaine, 1954-1957. For confirmation that this was indeed the case, see NIE 22-57, 8/13/57, FRUS, 1955-57, XXVII, 154-155.

outsiders and the more they will be in a position to press on our decisions in North Africa »<sup>25</sup>.

As we have seen, among the most important of these decisions was whether to equip Tunisia's new army despite its continuing — and increasing — support for the FLN. After months of bitter negotiations, the Americans finally presented Paris with an ultimatum : either France supplied arms to its former protectorate or the US and Britain would instead. Gaillard agreed but then balked before finally posing a new condition : Bourguiba would have to refuse a « gift » of arms from Nasser which he reported to be en route from Alexandria. When Washington replied that it was bound by a commitment to Bourguiba Gaillard warned that it was « susceptible of creating a grave crisis in Western solidarity... » and insisted, « in the strongest manner », that the Americans defer to his position<sup>26</sup>.

Proclaiming himself « really fed up with the goddam French », Ike went ahead anyway and provoked a storm of protest in Paris. But at the same time he made certain that France would be coming to the US for economic aid. In fact, that very day the Governor of the Bank of France called at the American Embassy to discuss the possibility of a loan package. French cash reserves were practically exhausted, with little left but the gold in the vaults. Mendès France concluded that the arms would never have been delivered otherwise, calling the situation « really humiliating »<sup>27</sup>.

Worse was yet to come : The previous month the NSC staff had urged the rejection of French aid requests if they failed to return forces from Algeria to Europe. At the time Dulles argued that he needed flexibility and the council agreed to leave this policy unstated. But when Jean Monnet went to Washington in January 1958 to clear the way for \$650 million in loans from the US, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the European Payments Union (EPU), he had to give a written commitment that France would demobilize 150,000 troops that had been raised for the Algerian War. They also agreed to freeze expenditures and cut their deficit by 40 %. As in the previous austerity plan the

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25. « Note pour le Président », 7/20/57, MAE, DE-CE, sous série OECE, vol. 362. In preparing for the December 1957 NATO summit, Dulles suggested that Eisenhower express his dissatisfaction with French efforts at economic redressment, while cautioning that « we do not wish to create impression we are being tough with French during their financial crisis, to pressure them into giving up Algeria ». Dulles would soon dispense with such subtlety, Dulles to DDE, undated, EOF, Part 1 : Eisenhower Administration Series, UPA, reel 22, frames 821-822.

26. Houghton-Dulles memcon, 11/13/57, Dulles Papers, Telephone Calls Series, Box 7, Memoranda of Telephone Conversations, General, 11/1/57-12/27/57 (3), DDEL.

27. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 11/13/57, Minutes of Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles and Christian Herter (1953-1961), UPA (1980), reel 10, frames 145-150 ; Jebb to Lloyd, 11/16/57, PREM 11, 4248, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew, UK ; *New York Times*, 11/16/57.

military bore the brunt of the budgetary reductions<sup>28</sup>. Together these conditions would have made it difficult to continue the war and impossible to win it.

In keeping with Monnet's technocratic approach to wrenching political problems the program was presented as nothing more than sound economic policy. But the memorandum that set the agenda for his mission reveals that Algeria was seen as more than just a debit in the ledger book. After spelling out the economic arguments against the war it concluded that the expense of operations in Algeria « is at the heart of the problem », both for « purely economic » reasons and, « On the political plane : by risking interference with the conditions [necessary] to obtain outside aid »<sup>29</sup>. Dry Finance Ministry documents cannot reveal the impact this capitulation had on French officials — and to read some of their memoirs one might think that the event never occurred<sup>30</sup>. But one of those involved, a future Governor of the Bank of France, never forgot : « For an official, doubtless young, but believing he served an independent state, a certain number of these conditions affected me at the time, I admit it, and affect me even now... »<sup>31</sup>.

Of course, at the time it was the French military leadership that was most directly affected. When the demobilization was coupled with another commitment to the lending agencies to cut procurement by a quarter their overall budget fell by 15 % — and this at a time when the intensity of the fighting in Algeria and especially along the Tunisian frontier had reached an all-time high. Consequently, the cuts fell most heavily on French forces stationed in Europe, contrary to the spirit if not the letter of the loan agreements. Faced with this threat to what little modern fighting power remained to them, the head of the Air Force resigned and the Chief of Staff threatened to do so<sup>32</sup>. Defense Minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas told them that the spending cuts had to be maintained. « [I]n the contrary case, he explained, the equilibrium of all the budget would be

28. WALL, « The U.S., 502 ; Robert Anderson to DDE, 1/25/58, EOF 1953-1961, Part 2 : International Series, UPA, reel 7, frames 793-798 ; « Memorandum », 1/11/58, MAE, DE-CE, vol. 331, Aide américaine, 1958-60.

29. On Monnet's apolitical style, see William HITCHCOCK, « The Challenge of Recovery : The Politics and Diplomacy of Reconstruction in France, 1945-1952 » (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1993), 50-55 ; « Note pour le ministre », 11/9/57, B2206, Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances, Paris.

30. See, for instance, Pierre Pflimlin — then Minister of Finance — *Mémoires d'un Européen de la IV<sup>e</sup> à la V<sup>e</sup> République* (Paris, 1991), 99-100, which implies that a rapid recovery made the loan unnecessary.

31. Antoine DUPONT-FAUVILLE, « La situation de l'économie française avant 1958 », in *De Gaulle en son siècle*, tome III, *Moderniser la France*, Institut Charles de Gaulle (Paris, 1992), 48-49.

32. Jean PLANCHAIS, *Une Histoire politique de l'Armée, II : 1940-1967 : de de Gaulle à de Gaulle*, (Paris, 1967), 295-296 ; Patrick FACON, « Le général Bailly, chef d'état-major de l'Armée de l'Air, ou l'impossible équilibre », unpublished manuscript in author's possession.

cast into doubt and with it doubtless the external help that France is presently soliciting »<sup>33</sup>.

The French forces in Algeria had long been obsessed by the danger of just such a betrayal by their civilian superiors. In their eyes America had been the midwife of their aborted missions to Indochina and Suez. They realized that the US stood between themselves and the hated Tunisians, who in turn sheltered the bulk of the remaining FLN forces. Despite having won the Battle of Algiers — doubling rebel casualties in 1957 over the previous year — French officers knew that the FLN units in Tunisia remained as a force in being which ensured the war could not be won as long as they survived. With each cross-border raid and mortar exchange the tension mounted. Glaring across the frontier, one of the soon-to-be-famous colonels exclaimed to Robert Lacoste, « *Monsieur le ministre*, it can't go on like this ! »<sup>34</sup>.

The very next day, February 8th, 1958, FLN forces firing from in and around the Tunisian border town of Sakiet Sidi Youssef shot down a French observation plane. The Minister of Defense's standing orders gave local commanders the right to retaliate if they did so within three hours of the original incident. He was later astonished to find that they had prepared a detailed plan of attack and 11 B-26 Marauders for just such a contingency. The name of the planes was apt, if unfortunate. It was market day when they arrived over Sakiet and they made direct hits on the school house and Red Cross trucks, with many women and children among the 68 civilians killed — « a pretty bad business », as Dulles put it<sup>35</sup>. The Tunisians quickly brought foreign correspondents and cameramen to the scene, creating a public relations fiasco for the French.

Embarrassed by the much-publicized fact that most of the attacking force was made in USA, the Americans could also recall that just four days before they had urged the French to avoid new border incidents and rein in their local commanders. Eisenhower himself said that he had « never been so astounded ». Dulles feared that there was a danger of the West losing the whole Northern tier of Africa : « it was a question of trying to save that or trying to save NATO ». He added that they were « liable to lose control of the situation in Congress, noting that there was criticism of our trying to pull France out of its financial hole without doing anything for North Africa »<sup>36</sup>.

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33. Delmas to secrétaire d'État aux Forces armées, 1/10/58. Service historique de l'Armée de l'Air, Château de Vincennes, E17149.

34. Paul-Marie de LA GORCE, *The French Army: A Military Political History* (New York, 1963), 455-456 ; Alistair HORNE, *A Savage War of Peace* (New York, 1977), 267. See also the copious evidence of frustration among French officers — and the plans for a riposte — in Service historique de l'Armée de Terre, Château de Vincennes, 1H 1965/1.

35. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 2/9/58, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 821-822.

36. Francfort to Alphand, 2/4/58, MAE, Direction Amérique 1952-63, États-Unis-Algérie, dossier 33. Diary entry, 2/10/58, AWF, Diary Series, Box 9 ; memcon DDE-Dulles, 2/9/58, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 821-822.

Indeed, thanks to the North Africans' tireless efforts, the US policy was increasingly controversial — especially after John F. Kennedy attacked it from the Senate floor the previous summer. Yet the administration's main concern was for the international rather than the domestic consequences of the US position. Eisenhower instructed Dulles to tell the French to disavow the action and offer to pay reparations or there would not be congressional support for financial aid to France — even though more than half of the loan package came from the IMF and the EPU, outside of direct Congressional oversight<sup>37</sup>.

The French tried to strike a balance between the Americans and their own army. While Gaillard refused to disavow the action his Foreign Minister told an American newspaper columnist that it was « a sad error » which had never been authorized by the government and the Assembly voted a resolution « regretting the civilian losses ». To secure Anglo-American « good offices » to resolve the crisis — Bourguiba had blockaded French bases and planned to petition the Security Council — the cabinet had to pledge to compensate the survivors<sup>38</sup>. These extraordinary moves provoked indignation among French officers in Algeria and many of them began to organize against the government<sup>39</sup>.

Though the American appointee, Robert Murphy, was nominally just a neutral go-between, he showed his bias from the first day and for the following two months badgered Gaillard to give in to the Tunisians<sup>40</sup>. At the same time Dulles ordered preparations for a diplomatic offensive to end the Algerian War. « The present French policy was leading inevitably to a war in which the whole Arab world would be involved with Communist support » Dulles explained to the British Ambassador, « France would become exhausted and would collapse, as in Indo-China ; and the Russians would be left masters of the field ». He wanted their support to « seize the opportunity to deal with the whole French relationship with North Africa. He saw the ultimate goal as a French Commonwealth, on the British model... There need not be immediate independence for Algeria, but this must be a recognizable goal »<sup>41</sup>.

The British balked at the idea of bringing the incendiary issue of Algerian independence into an already explosive situation, but Dulles was undeterred. If Indochina was the pattern he feared would repeat itself it now provided a model

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37. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 2/9/58, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 821-822.

38. 2/11/58 *New York Herald Tribune* ; *L'Année politique 1958* (Paris, 1959), 17-19 ; « Note : Affaire de Sakiet devant les Nations Unies », 2/19/58, MAE, ONU, Dossier 112.

39. Among them was their commander, General Raoul Salan, who would head the committee of public safety in Algiers that May, Philip WILLIAMS, *Wars, Plots and Scandals in Post-War France* (Cambridge, U.K., 1970), 144.

40. WALL, « The US », 504. Murphy was already a *bête noire* because of his background as FDR's representative to Vichy, Pierre MÉLANDRI and Maurice VAISSE, « La "boîte à chagrin" », in RIOUX, *La Guerre*, 439.

41. Greene memo, 2/12/58, Dulles Papers, SACS, Box 12, Greene-Peacock, 2/58 (3), DDEL ; Herter-Holmes telephone call, 2/26/58, Christian Herter Papers, Telephone Calls 8/15/57-12/31/57, Box 11, DDEL ; Caccia to Lloyd, 2/19/58, PRO, PREM 11, 2561.

for what he meant to do about it : « The time ha[s] come, he told the President, when we [will] probably have to move in. North Africa makes the European economy viable and is of the utmost importance. This is the same story as Viet-Nam, where we had helped out on condition that the French grant unconditional independence... »<sup>42</sup>.

The Soviets, for their part, warned the French that the Americans planned to take their place if they persisted, but Deputy Foreign Minister Valerian Zorin said that there was still time for France to undertake « an “audacious” initiative to settle the Algerian problem... » When the French Ambassador protested that they were pursuing reform, Zorin replied that time was pressing, the problem was on the way to internationalization, and Moscow would then have to tend to its own interests. By May Krushchev was openly calling for Algerian independence<sup>43</sup>.

So Krushchev, Zorin, Eisenhower and Dulles had all come to agree that Algerian independence was the only solution. Ike might have spoken for all when he asked : « how do we get the French to see a little sense ? » Dulles found a way. « Speaking personally and as a friend » — as he often did when making threats — he told Ambassador Alphand that « it is indispensable that you look for a political solution while there is still time ». More to the point, he said that « whatever may be the French determination to continue the fight...financial conditions could, at some point, stand in their way », adding that certain Senators had asked him to reverse the loan decision. « Never ... has the Secretary of State expressed himself with such force on this subject », Alphand reported to Paris<sup>44</sup>.

Two days later Gaillard reversed a long-standing French policy by proposing a Western Mediterranean Pact. What lay behind the new initiative ? While it was unthinkable to admit any such thing in public, Louis Joxe, the Quai d'Orsay Secretary General, made their inclinations clear to the British Ambassador : « By such means it might...be possible for France to accept some “Algerian personality”. Within such an economic-politico-military framework, France might indeed be induced to accept the emergence of a new Algeria »<sup>45</sup>.

This was not enough to deter the Americans from pressing on with their own plan to end the war. Murphy told his British counterpart that Eisenhower would send a personal envoy to Paris to demand that they seek a cease-fire and an international conference to « discuss the Algerian problem in the context of the

42. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 3/1/58, AWF, Diary Series, Box 31, Toner Notes, 3/58, DDEL.

43. Dejean to Pineau, 3/17/58, MAE, Europe 1944-1960, URSS, Dossier 271.

44. DDE Dictation, 3/3/58, AWF, Diary Series, DDEL ; Alphand to MAE, 3/5/58, MAE, Direction Amérique 1952-63, États-Unis-Algérie, Dossier (provisional number) 33.

45. Jebb to Lloyd, 3/3/58, PRO, PREM 11, 2561. See also Elly HERMON, « A propos du plan Felix Gaillard de pacte méditerranéen », *Revue d'histoire diplomatique* 1 (1995), 12-13. For Dulles' equivocal reaction, see Lloyd to Foreign Office, 3/13/58, PRO, PREM 11, 2561 ; memcon Pineau-Dulles-Lloyd, 3/12/58, DDF, 1958, I, No. 179.



North African situation as a whole ... the United States (perhaps with the United Kingdom) would try to persuade [the] F.L.N. to agree to the cease-fire ». If the *French* did not agree, the US « would be forced to act in order to preserve the present Western orientation of Tunisia and Morocco » by providing them with political support and economic and military aid<sup>46</sup>. Since both states openly admitted to aiding the rebels such a policy would have positioned America squarely behind France's North African adversaries in a public and definitive fashion just as the war was spreading beyond Algeria.

Foreign Secretary Selwyn Lloyd feared that « this proposal would come to the French like a bomb ». For the following month he and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan appealed to the Americans to delay their ultimatum at least until the conclusion of the French-Tunisian talks. Dulles was willing to be flexible. He explained that, while he intended to persuade Paris to call for a cease fire and peace conference, if they did not agree « other measures would become necessary, and...British support would be vital »<sup>47</sup>. Dulles had already begun to upgrade US contacts with the rebels, even flying them to Tunis for clandestine meetings<sup>48</sup>.

Eisenhower backed Dulles in his efforts to end the war, explaining that « he saw no solution to the North African problem except a political settlement which would give Algeria a chance for independence ». Most importantly, « He indicated that he thought we should accept considerable risks as far as France's role in NATO was concerned in an effort to try to get France to take such a position »<sup>49</sup>. Eisenhower then approved a letter to the French Prime Minister that represented his greatest risk yet in their confrontation over North Africa. Though carefully worded, its meaning was unmistakable. Murphy urged that it be delayed until after he had made one last effort to persuade the French to agree to the good officers' proposals. In their April 9th meeting, Gaillard appeared ready to evacuate all but one of the French bases without securing any Tunisian concessions over the FLN's cross-border attacks — Bourguiba had refused to allow even a neutral investigatory commission with no enforcement powers. But Pineau demanded American support in the Security Council, with Gaillard warning that otherwise this would lead to « a major crisis in the Western Alliance ». By now the Americans were becoming *blasé* about such threats and Murphy refused to give any assurance. But he might well have been surprised when Pineau then asked « what solution the United States wanted in Algeria ».

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46. Murphy said this « would be confined in the first instance to those two countries », perhaps indicating that they were even considering support for the Algerians themselves, Beeley to Lloyd, 3/12/58, PRO, PREM 11, 2561.

47. Lloyd to Caccia, 3/22/58, PRO, FO 371, 131588 ; Lloyd to Beeley, 3/13/58, PRO, PREM 11, 2561 ; Beeley to Ross, 3/31/58, PRO, FO 371, 131588.

48. Herter to Houghton, Murphy, Jones, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 629-630, and see also Wall, « The US », 508-509.

49. Memcon DDE-Dulles, 4/3/58, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 841.

Murphy replied that he was not authorized to speak on the subject, to which Gaillard complained that « France had never received from her Allies in private any friendly advice or suggestions about Algeria »<sup>50</sup>.

Now it was Gaillard's turn to be surprised. The next day he was presented with the President's letter. Eisenhower suggested that accepting the settlement with Tunisia could provide « an opportunity to deal constructively with the larger aspects of the problem », warned that « time is running out », and asked whether France could continue to enjoy close relations with the region « unless that relationship is freely accepted in North Africa »<sup>51</sup>. According to the American envoy, the French read the letter with « no detectable resentment but sort of grave preoccupations »<sup>52</sup>.

The resentment was reserved for a bitter 11-hour debate within the Gaillard cabinet. One irate participant proposed reoccupying Tunisia but Finance Minister Pierre Pflimlin warned of the Suez precedent and President René Coty rallied reluctant ministers by « underlin[ing] the risks » of rejecting the good offices mission<sup>53</sup>. One can assume that among those risks was the denial of American economic aid, as during Suez, since another balance of payments crisis was looming. This would have jeopardized their ability to fulfill commitments to the European Economic Community, scheduled to get under way the following January.

Nevertheless, the conservatives in the cabinet insisted that the Assembly approve their agreement to set aside the issue of Tunisian aid to the FLN and evacuate their bases. As the deputies sat in frosty silence, Gaillard insisted that the good offices mission had not touched on Algeria and that the government made its decision free from outside pressure. But everyone from François Mitterrand to Jean-Marie Le Pen recognized and condemned America's role in reversing Gaillard's position. A massive defection of right-wing deputies then brought down the penultimate government of the Fourth Republic.

But the hard-liners were too few to form their own coalition and they began to fear a new cabinet would be still less capable of withstanding outside pressure to capitulate in Algeria. Smarting from having played the scapegoat in the Sakiet crisis and believing that the war was nearly won, the military threatened to mutiny rather than accept what Lacoste warned would be a « diplomatic Dien Bien Phu »<sup>54</sup>. When the dovish Pflimlin finally gained a governing majority on May

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50. Jebb to Lloyd, 4/9/58, PRO, FO 371, 131589.

51. DDE to Gaillard, April 10, 1958, EOF 1953-1961, Part 2 : International Series, UPA, reel 7, frames 782-784. Originally the letter had been still stronger but at British urging they agreed to tone it down, see Caccia to Lloyd, 4/5/58, PRO, FO 371, 131589, and the accompanying correspondence. According to Bernard DROZ and Evelyne LEVER, the Americans at the same time drew attention to their earlier loan, *Histoire de la guerre d'Algérie. 1954-1962* (Paris, 1982), 168.

52. Editorial Note, FRUS, 1958-60, XIII, 842.

53. PFLIMLIN, *Mémoires*, 103-104.

54. René REMOND, *Le Retour de de Gaulle* (Brussels, 1987), 61-62.

13th, 1958 the *colons* in Algiers sacked the American cultural center and stormed the Government House. The story of how the government gradually lost control of the army and even the police has been told often enough before. More recently it was revealed that it took a last minute telephone call to de Gaulle to cancel a French Army plan to invade Tunisia. Before long the General's *de facto* power was made *de jure*, and so ended the Fourth Republic <sup>55</sup>.

The Americans judged that le Général would take a more liberal approach to North Africa although they entertained no illusions about his attitude to Atlantic solidarity. Nevertheless, they adopted a « cool and careful noninterventionist pose » as he drove to power — as one historian has put it — content merely to prevent any expansion of the conflict into Tunisia. Their frustration with the Fourth Republic's chronic instability and inability to unite behind consistent policies was so profound that they welcomed its collapse and the consequent return of de Gaulle <sup>56</sup>. As Ike concluded a few weeks later : « France presents a twelve year history of almost unbroken moral, political and military deterioration ... [This] long dismal history ... almost demanded the presence of a “strong man” — in the person of de Gaulle » <sup>57</sup>. One cannot prove that the President intended to help history along when he subjected a structure he perceived as so weak to such severe pressure, but another remark he made upon first hearing le Général was back is still more suggestive : « Well, I think its all right. I think the French need to be told what to do for a while » <sup>58</sup>.

Historians differ on whether the Fourth Republic was really so decrepit as to have been inevitably doomed, but they do agree that the Sakiet crisis set off the chain of events that culminated in the return of de Gaulle <sup>59</sup>. Yet even while acknowledging the importance of outside pressure in 1958 they neglect to analyze it. Of course, there were an array of fundamental reasons for the fall of the republic <sup>60</sup>. But the particular way in which this crisis came to a head in 1958 — the fact, for instance, that the war did not spread throughout North Africa — can only be explained if one understands that, even before the return of de Gaulle, the French were being « told what to do » by ways and means they could hardly ignore.

Yet the diplomatic historian's dubious if unavoidable practice of referring to « the French » (or the Algerians, or the Americans) can rarely be more misleading than for this people and this period. It places them on a plane of

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55. Georges GORSE, « La Nuit de Mai », *Revue des Deux Mondes* (November, 1984) : 304-306.

56. WALL, « The US », 491-492, 510-511.

57. DDE to Paul Hoffman, 6/23/58, EOF, Part 1 : Eisenhower Administration Series, UPA, reel 16, frame 206.

58. Eisenhower Oral History, DDEL.

59. For examples see Alfred GROSSER, *Affaires extérieures : La politique de la France, 1944-1989* (Paris, 1989), 141 ; HORNE, *Savage War*, 250 ; MÉLANDRI and VAÏSSE, « La Boîte », 375.

60. See Jean-Pierre RIOUX's subtle analysis in *The Fourth Republic, 1944-1958* (Cambridge, 1987), 309-313.

abstraction that hardly approximates the politics of the Fourth Republic — the divisions not merely between its short-lived governments and a public that often held them in contempt, but within cabinets and administrations, even within the minds of ministers and civil servants. During each key episode the French spoke with many voices, at least some of which welcomed the foreign interference their official spokesmen professed to deplore. Thus, even while his government was desperately looking for ways to finance the war, the Governor of the Bank of France said that he hoped the US « was not going to bail France out of its present difficulties ». When Washington approved the loan the *Wall Street Journal* found that « most [French officials] privately concede that American intransigence indirectly helped sell ‘austerity’ to the parliament ». Jean Monnet later told Dulles that the loan had been « in the common interest », since it had averted a crisis at a difficult time and since then « the evolution of thinking in France had...moved French opinion toward a more reasonable position as regards North Africa »<sup>61</sup>.

Though many people were becoming more « reasonable » about Algeria Gaillard still had to move with caution. During the arms crisis his last minute demand that Bourguiba refuse the Egyptian « gift » looked suspiciously like an excuse to allow his allies to supply arms instead. Both Selwyn Lloyd and Dulles suspected that the Prime Minister welcomed the French public’s outraged reaction as a way to strengthen his position, which was vulnerable to attacks on the defense cuts and the *loi cadre*, a political reform program for Algeria<sup>62</sup>. Though the *loi* was only a halting first step toward autonomy, when Joxe proposed the Mediterranean Pact as a means to persuade the French to « accept the emergence of a new Algeria » he thought this could be presented as « the whole object of the *loi cadre* ». But at the same time Joxe « begged [the British] to believe that at the moment such ideas could only be said to be his own », adding that if they « thought there was anything in them perhaps [they] might, [them]selves, put forward or sponsor such ideas »<sup>63</sup>.

As we have seen, a month later the Prime Minister himself asked what solution his allies preferred for Algeria. While Pineau blamed the timing and form of the American response for the fall of the government, he also regretted that Eisenhower had not been more specific as to what he wanted them to do about North Africa<sup>64</sup>. When the French were still without a new cabinet, Pineau’s eventual (and very temporary) replacement as Foreign Minister, René

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61. Memcon Dulles-Houghton, 4/1/57, FRUS, 1955-57, XXVII, 118-120 ; 2/5/58 *Wall Street Journal* ; memcon Dulles-Monnet, 5/10/58, JFDP, Chronological Series, Box 16, 5/58 (3), DDEL. Even Air Force and Navy officers were coming to question the costs of Algeria and to resent the Army’s predominant influence there.

62. Lloyd to Jebb, 12/4/57, PRO, PREM 11, 2560 ; memcon Dulles-Brentano, 11/23/57, FRUS, 1955-57, IV, 191.

63. See note 45 above.

64. Jebb to Lloyd, 4/16/58, PRO, FO 371, 131590 ; Jebb to Lloyd, 4/11/58, *ibid.*

Pleven, went so far as to ask the Americans to sound out the FLN on its terms for a cease-fire<sup>65</sup>. Even if all this cannot prove that the French government, as such, was seeking outside support *and opposition* to help it to end the war, it should at least put to rest the idea that this was a purely internal matter concerning France alone.

It will take many more studies like this one to demonstrate that the Algerian War was as much an international as a domestic political conflict, but one can now suggest the outlines of such an argument. Even without reference to the events of 1958, any dismissal of its diplomatic history seems especially dubious as Algeria's was the first modern « war for national liberation » — with the rebels targeting foreign correspondents, the United Nations, and international opinion as much or more than conventional military objectives<sup>66</sup>. For weapons they employed human rights reports, press conferences, and youth congresses, aiming at world opinion and international law more than conventional military objectives. By the end, when they no longer dared to risk crossing the fortified barriers around Algeria, Algerian ministers rallied majorities against France in the General Assembly, won the accolades of countless international conferences, and gained 21 gun salutes in capitals across the globe. These accomplishments, in turn, inspired the hard-pressed insurgents to endure in their struggle. Together with the rebel armies and administration in Morocco and Tunisia — supplied and funded by countries as diverse as Saudi Arabia and Communist China — they outlasted a French government that had become obsessed with the war's impact on its reputation abroad<sup>67</sup>.

Although it would have been more fitting for a great power to have moved with stately grace in « granting » Algeria independence, one must not forget that de Gaulle was frustrated in his initial designs and driven to his final decision. And while it is more satisfying to remember the Algerian War as a successful fight *by* Frenchmen to redeem the true, generous France by seeing right by the Algerians, France in Algeria did not « liberate itself ». Contrary to Gaullist mythmaking, the FLN forced France to relinquish Algeria in the international arena. To ignore that fact is to obscure the essential nature of the struggle. But by viewing the war within that wider context one can begin to see how, in freeing Algeria, the French also freed themselves.

Matthew CONNELLY

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65. WALL, « US », 506.

66. On the very first day of the revolt the FLN announced that they intended to « internationalise the Algerian question ». Accordingly, many of their key strategic decisions — and blunders — were based on the hoped-for effect abroad, see Guy PERVILLE, « L'insertion internationale du F.L.N. algérien », *Relations Internationales* 31 (Autumn 1982): 373-386; HORNE, *Savage War*, 85, 190-191, 218-219.

67. MÉLANDRI and VAISSE, « La Boîte », 369, 379-380; John RUEDY, *Modern Algeria: The Origins and Development of a Nation* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1992), 169.